



State of Connecticut

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Testimony

Government Administration & Elections Committee

February 25, 2015

In Support of: S.B. No. 739

Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, Senator McLachlan, Representative Smith and members of the Government Administration & Elections Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Proposed S.B. No. 739 AN ACT DESIGNATING GUSTAVE WHITEHEAD'S NUMBER 21 AS THE STATE PIONEERING AIRCRAFT.

Gustave Whitehead is an important part of local and national history. He was the first man to make a manned, powered, controlled flight, which he complete on August 14, 1901 at Lordship Manor, Connecticut with his "Number 21" aircraft.

While aviation technology looks very different today, this aircraft was where it all began. Shaped with bamboo ribs and bat like wings and running on acetylene gas, the No. 21 looked like a broad glider. But it flew and it was first.

While many fans of the Wright brothers have tried to deny the legitimacy of Whitehead's first flight, Connecticut has listened to the new research that points to the truth in Gustave Whitehead's journey.

In 2013, we passed Public Act 13-210, which specifies that Powered Flight Day is in honor of the first powered flight by Gustave Whitehead, rather than the Wright Brothers. In 2014, Connecticut also passed a resolution officially recognizing Connecticut as first in flight and honoring Whitehead's flight for paving the way for Connecticut to be a leader in aviation innovation.

Just as our state has recognized Whitehead as the first person to take flight, it is time to recognize his invention and honor the history of the technology itself.

SB 739 would further honor Gustave Whitehead, the father of manned, power-controlled flight, by amending the general statutes to designate Gustave Whitehead's Number 21 as the state pioneering aircraft.

By celebrating our history we can solidify our history and ensure that the legacy of Whitehead lives on forever.

Thank you for listening to my testimony in support of honoring the incredible invention that shaped the future of aviation for the entire world.